WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A computer program product for use in conjunction with a system, the computer program product comprising a computer readable storage medium and a computer program mechanism embedded therein, the computer program mechanism comprising:

5   a user profile database comprising a plurality of personal profiles, wherein

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles corresponds to a user in a computerized social network,

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes an identity of at least one user other than the user represented by the respective

10   personal profile; and

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes a capability to organize each said at least one user into a plurality of groups associated with the user corresponding to the respective personal profile; and

a social networking module for supporting said computerized social network,

15   wherein said social networking module further comprises a friend access routine that includes:

instructions for receiving a request from a first user to access users in the personal profile of a second user; and

instructions for determining which of the users in the personal profile of

20   the second user can be accessed by the first user.

2.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein said instructions for determining which of the users in the personal profile of the second user can be accessed by the first user comprise:

25   (A) instructions for selecting a group in the personal profile of the second user;

(B) instructions for determining whether said group selected by an instance of the instructions for selecting is a private group or a public group, wherein

when said group is a public group, said group is added to an accessible group array, and

30   when said group is a private group, said instructions for determining further comprise instructions for determining whether said first user is a member of said private group and wherein,

when said first user is a member of said private group, said group is added to said accessible group array, and

20

when said first user is not a member of said private group, said group is not added to said accessible group array;

(C) instructions for repeating instructions (A) and instructions (B) until each group in the personal profile of the second user has been evaluated; and

5   (D) instructions for granting access to users in each of the groups in the accessible group array to said first user.

3.   The computer program product of claim 2 wherein said instructions for granting access to users in each of the groups in the accessible group array comprise:

10   (i) instructions for selecting a group G from said accessible group array;

(ii) instructions for selecting a user C from the group G selected in the last instance of the instructions for selecting (i);

(iii) instructions for determining whether said second user is in a public group in the personal profile associated with said user C, wherein

15   when said second user is in a public group defined by the personal profile associated with said user C, said user C is added to an access array, and

when said second user is not in a public group defined by the personal profile associated with said user C, said instructions for determining (iii) further comprise instructions for determining whether said first user and said second user are both in the

20   same private group defined by said user C's personal profile, wherein

when said first user and said second user are both in the same private group defined by said user C's personal profile, said user C is added to said access array, and

when said first user and said second user are not both in the same

25   private group defined by said user C's personal profile, said user C is not added to said access array;

(iv) instructions for repeating said instructions for selecting (ii) and said instructions for determining (iii) until each user in the group G has been considered;

(v) instructions for repeating instructions (i) through (iv) until each group G in

30   said accessible group array has been considered; and

(vi) instructions for granting said first user access to each user in the access array.

4.   The computer program product of claim 3 wherein a target user has a personal profile defining a public group that includes a bulletin board for sending and receiving

21

messages between users in the public group and wherein said first user cannot review messages in said bulletin board unless said target user is in the access array.

5.   The computer program product of claim 3 wherein a target user has a personal profile defining a private group that includes a bulletin board for sending and receiving messages between users in the public group and wherein said first user cannot review messages in said bulletin board unless said first user is in said private group.

6.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles comprises a photograph album having a plurality of photographs, and wherein each photograph in said plurality of photographs includes an access designation, wherein

when the access designation of a photograph in said plurality of photographs is in a first setting, each user of the computerized social network can access said photograph; and

when the access designation of a photograph in said plurality of photographs is in a second setting, a user of the computerized social network cannot access said photograph unless said user is a member of a group, defined by said profile, that has access privilege to said photograph when the access designation of said photograph is in said second setting.

7.   The computer program product of claim 3 wherein a target user has a personal profile including one or more user comments posted by users within one or more groups defines by said personal profile and wherein said first user cannot review said one or more user comments unless said target user is in the access array.

8.   The computer program product of claim 3 wherein a target user has a personal profile including a personal journal for posting journal entries written by said target user, and wherein said first user cannot review said personal journal unless said target user is in the access array.

9.   The computer program product of claim 3 wherein the user C has a personal profile that includes an ignore list and when said first user is in said ignore list, said user C is not added to said access array regardless of whether said second user is in a public

group defined in the personal profile associated with user C and regardless of whether said first user and said second user are in the same private group defined by said user C's personal profile.

10.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes a name of the user corresponding to the personal profile.

11.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes an address of the user corresponding to the personal profile.

12.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes a password of the user corresponding to the personal profile.

13.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes an interest or hobby of the user corresponding to the personal profile.

14.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes an occupation of the user corresponding to the personal profile.

15.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein said social networking module further comprises a profile maintenance routine, said profile maintenance routine including instructions for facilitating an update of a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles by the user corresponding to said personal profile.

16.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein said one or more groups includes a public group.

17.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein said one or more groups includes a private group.

23

18.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein said social networking module further comprises a login routine, said login routine including instructions for allowing a user to access the personal profile corresponding to the user in the user profile database.

19.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein a personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes one or more fields describing the user corresponding to the personal profile and wherein the computer program mechanism further includes instructions for designating each of the fields in the one or more fields as public or private.

20.   The computer program product of claim 19, the computer program mechanism further including instructions for granting access to users of a group in said plurality of groups access to a field in said personal profile when said field has been designated as private.

21.   The computer program product of claim 1 wherein the system is a computer, cell phone, or personal digital assistant.

22.   A system for hosting a computerized social network, the computer system comprising:
        a central processing unit;
        a memory, coupled to the central processing unit, the memory storing a user profile database and a social networking module, wherein
            the user profile database comprises a plurality of personal profiles, and wherein
                each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles corresponds to a user in said computerized social network,
                each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes an identity of at least one user other than the user represented by the respective personal profile, and
                each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes a capability to organize each said at least one user into one or more groups associated with the user corresponding to the respective personal profile; and wherein
            the social networking module comprises a friend access routine that includes:

24

instructions for receiving a request from a first user to access users in the personal profile of a second user; and

instructions for determining which of the users in the personal profile of the second user can be accessed by the first user.

5

23.   The system of claim 1 wherein the system is a computer, cell phone, or personal digital assistant.

24.   A computer program product for use in conjunction with a system, the computer
10   program product comprising a computer readable storage medium and a computer program mechanism embedded therein, the computer program mechanism for facilitating a computerized social network, the computer program mechanism comprising

a user profile database comprising a plurality of personal profiles;

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles
15   corresponding to a user in a computerized social network,

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles including an identity of at least one user of the computerized social network other than the user represented by the respective personal profile, and

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles
20   including a capability to organize each said at least one user into one or more groups associated with the user corresponding to the respective personal profile.

25. The computer program product of claim 24 wherein the system is a computer, cell phone, or personal digital assistant.

25

26.   A method for determining which of a plurality of users in a personal profile of a second user can be accessed by a first user, wherein said plurality of users are organized into a plurality of groups in said personal profile, the method comprising:

(A) receiving a request from said first user to access said plurality of users in the
30   personal profile of said second user, wherein said first user and said second user are participants in a social network;

(B) selecting a group in the plurality of groups in the personal profile of the second user;

25

(C) determining whether said group selected by said selecting (B) is a private group or a public group, wherein

when said group is a public group, said group is added to an accessible group list, and

when said group is a private group, said determining (C) further comprises determining whether said first user is a member of said private group and wherein,

when said first user is a member of said private group, said group is added to said accessible group list, and

when said first user is not a member of said private group, said group is not added to said accessible group list;

(D) repeating (B) and (C) until each group in the personal profile of the second user has been evaluated; and

(E) granting access to users in each of the groups in the accessible group list to said first user.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein said granting (E) comprises:

(i) selecting a group G from said accessible group list;

(ii) selecting a user C from the group G selected in the last instance of said selecting (i);

(iii) determining whether said second user is in a public group in a personal profile associated with said user C, wherein

when said second user is in a public group defined by the personal profile associated with said user C, said user C is added to an access list, and

when said second user is not in a public group defined by the personal profile associated with said user C, said determining (iii) further comprises determining whether said first user and said second user are both in the same private group defined by said user C's personal profile, wherein

when said first user and said second user are both in the same private group defined by said user C's personal profile, said user C is added to said access list, and

when said first user and said second user are not both in the same private group defined by said user C's personal profile, said user C is not added to said access list;

26

(iv) repeating said selecting (ii) and said determining (iii) until each user in the group G has been considered;

(v) repeating (i) through (iv) until each group G in said accessible group list has been considered; and

5

(vi) granting said first user access to each user in the access list.

28. A method for hosting a social network that includes a user profile database comprising a plurality of personal profiles, wherein

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles

10 corresponds to a user in said social network,

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles includes an identity of at least one user other than the user represented by the respective personal profile, and

each respective personal profile in said plurality of personal profiles

15 includes a capability to organize each said at least one user into one or more groups associated with the user corresponding to the respective personal profile; the method comprising:

(A) receiving a request from a first user to access users in the personal profile of a second user;

20

(B) selecting a user C from a group G in the personal profile of said second user;

(C) determining whether said second user is in a group in a personal profile associated with said user C, wherein

when said second user is in a group defined by the personal profile associated with said user C, said user C is added to an access list, and

25

when said second user is not in a group defined by the personal profile associated with said user C, said user C is not added to said access list;

(D) repeating said selecting (B) and said determining (C) until each user in the group G has been considered;

(E) repeating (B) through (D) until each group G in the personal profile of the

30 second user has been considered; and

(F) granting said first user access to each user in the access list.

27